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ABSTRACT

This study determined which of three types of educational barriers (institutional, situational, or dispositional) represented the major problem preventing adult students from completing their general educational development (GED) studies at Community College of Philadelphia (CCP) in Pennsylvania. A Likert-type survey instrument was used to collect data for the survey, which was then sent out to 400 randomly selected former students who had been enrolled in the GED program from the fall of 1998 through the summer of 1999 from a population of about 1,200. Of the 400 surveys, 168 were returned, for a response rate of 42%. Of these, 124 (31%) were selected for usability. Findings include: (1) 60% of respondents were African American, 20% were Latino, 19% white, and 2% Native American; (2) 52% of respondents were single with children; (3) 52% were unemployed, 38% had completed grade levels between 6th and 9th grade, and 48% had enrolled in the GED course at CCP 2 or 3 times; and (4) of the study participants, 80% never completed their GED programs. Results showed most situational barriers had slightly higher means: race was not a factor in dropout rates, gender was a major factor in dropout rates, marital status was not a major factor, and dropout rates were higher among those who were employed during the program. The paper recommends that CCP organize a distance learning program for those with home responsibilities that present obstacles and offer programs at the workplace for those with work-related obstacles. Appended are: Survey Questionnaire; and Sample of a Reminder Letter. (Contains 16 tables and 38 references.) (Author/NB)

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FACTORS INFLUENCING THE SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF THE GENERAL EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (GED) PROGRAM AT COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF PHILADELPHIA AS PERCEIVED BY THE GED STUDENTS

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A Dissertation
Submitted to
the Temple University
Graduate Board

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirement for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

By

Admasu Etefa Tucho
August, 2000

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ABSTRACT

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF THE GENERAL EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (GED) PROGRAM AT COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF PHILADELPHIA AS PECEIVED BY THE GED STUDENTS

By Admasu Etefa Tucho

Doctor of Education
Temple University, 2000

Doctoral Advisory Committee Chair: Dr. Vivian Ikpa

The purpose of the study was to ascertain which of three types of educational barriers (institutional, situational, or dispositional) represent the major problem preventing adult students from completing their GED studies at Community College of Philadelphia (CCP).

A quantitative descriptive approach was used to collect and analyze data. The population for this study included about 1,200 former students who had been enrolled in the GED program from fall 1998 through

summer 1999. A systematic random sampling approach was used to collect data in this study.

A Likert-type survey instrument was used to collect data for this study. The researcher developed the survey instrument after reviewing previous studies on the subject. Three experts evaluated the validity of the instrument. A test-retest technique was used to evaluate the reliability of the instrument. The survey forms were sent to 400 randomly selected students drawn from a population of about 1200. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences was used to analyze the collected data. The level of significance was tested at the .05 level.

The following procedures were used to analyze data: First, item-by-item analysis was employed to describe the responses of the subjects for each item in the instrument. Second, correlated t-tests were used to compare domain and/or factor scores to ascertain which ones most strongly affected persistence of the GED students. Third, race, age, gender, marital status, and job status were also analyzed to determine whether demographic factors affected the results. Fourth, factor analysis was used to ascertain whether the items that

constituted each of the three barriers actually clustered together. Findings indicated that items related to situational barriers had slightly higher means, followed by factors associated with institutional barriers, and then dispositional barriers.

From the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn: gender appeared to be a major factor in subjects' dropping out; race or ethnic origin was not a factor in students' dropping out; marital status was not a major factor in preventing GED students from completing their studies without interruption; there was an indication that job status was a factor in GED students' dropout problems.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Today, we live in a sophisticated world of technology that requires the use of written materials and products of modern technology for business and communication purposes. To apply technology one needs to read and understand written directions, manuals, and descriptions. Although academic credentials such as college degrees or high school diplomas are generally considered to be more important than experience in today's world, it has been noted that about 750,000 of the people who graduate from high school each year cannot read their diplomas (Denton, 1994). A recent issue of the General Educational Development (GED) Public Service Announcements by the American Council on Education (ACE, no date) reported that nearly 50 million American adults are without a high-school diploma, including one in every four African-American adults.

Philadelphia is home for about 1.6 million people of diverse social, cultural, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. The three major ethnic groups in the "City of Brotherly Love," as it is often called, include whites (53.5%), blacks (39.9 %), and Latinos (5.6%). The 1% includes people of

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Asian origin, Native Americans, and other minority groups (U.S. Department of Commerce, June 1992).

It is also noted that many of Philadelphia's residents lack basic skills in arithmetic operations and the ability to understand and use information contained in such documents as job application forms, bus schedules, maps, tables, and indexes.

The Office of the Adult Basic Education program (ABE) at Community College of Philadelphia (CCP), in its 1994-95 annual report, estimated the number of adults 17 and older in the City of Philadelphia without a high school or an equivalency diploma at 469,500. Of these, approximately 242,500 were believed to have less than a fifth grade level of attainment in reading, writing, and mathematics. Of course, many of them are believed to be school dropouts.

Darkenwald and Merriam (1982) reported that many adults claim financial difficulties, home responsibilities, low test scores in the past, aging, dissatisfaction with the teacher, pregnancy, transportation, lack of reliable babysitters, and other obstacles prevented them from staying in the adult education programs to the end. Cross (1992) grouped these and other educational barriers into three major categories: situational, institutional, and dispositional (psychological). Situational barriers involve

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financial difficulties, lack of time to study, transportation problems, lack of reliable child care, drug and alcohol abuse, pregnancy, illness, fear of peers, absence of family support, spousal abuse, and job-related problems. Under institutional barriers come inconvenient school schedule, strict attendance policies, poor teaching methods, poor teacher-student relationship, repeated late arrival or total absence of teacher, lack of a tutor, shortage of interesting study courses, cost of school and study materials. Dispositional (psychological) barriers include personal values and beliefs toward schooling and education. Also included in this category are sentiments like "I don't like to study," "I don't know how to study," "I am too old for school," "I am tired of school," and "Education has no purpose".

It is true that a large majority of adult learners who sign up for non-credit adult education classes, including GED, drop out each semester without further notice. Neither the program director nor the GED teachers know why they leave their studies before the end of the required lesson.

The Research Setting: Community College of Philadelphia

The General Educational Development (GED), or often called General Equivalency Diploma, is a nationwide program created to help adult students receive their high school equivalency diploma in a non-traditional schooling system. The GED program started at CCP in 1971. Today, it is one of several noncredit programs offered under the Department of Community Service. Other programs are Pre-GED, Adult Basic Education (ABE), English as a Second Language (ESL), and noncredit professional training and workshops.

To apply for the GED program at CCP, an applicant must be at least 18 years old. However, individuals between the ages of 16 and 18 are required to get approval from the GED program coordinator for enrollment. Once the application process is completed, applicants are notified by mail to appear in person on a designated date to take a placement test. Based on the test score, students are placed in the proper class levels, namely, GED, Pre-GED, or ABE. The placement test is usually given on the first and second days of the semester. On this date, candidates take Form 7, Level A of the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE). The test booklet contains 110 questions; 70 of these are English grammar and usage questions, while the remaining 40 are

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arithmetic problems. Those who score 9.0 and above are usually placed in the GED classes. The rest are distributed over Pre-GED classes (6.0 to 8.9) and ABE (below 6.0). Therefore, candidates who obtain admission into the GED program are believed to be better in reading, writing, and solving arithmetic problems than those put in the pre-GED or ABE. Concerning the ESL program, students in this program are all foreigners who came from non-English speaking countries. The GED, pre-GED, ABE, and ESL classes are all offered free of charge except a $30 registration fee for those who work. However, students have to purchase textbooks. Still, the Office of Public Welfare pays the book fee for those on public assistance. The college record also shows that the average grade completed by the GED students at CCP is eighth grade (ABE Report, 1994/95).

The College data show that blacks have had the highest enrollment rate in the GED program since its commencement in 1971, followed by Latinos and whites. An insignificant number of Asian and Native American students also participate in the program. Many students are single parents, mostly female, unemployed, and dependent on public assistance.

The GED courses at CCP are divided into two major categories: Reading and writing skills and mathematics. A

teacher who is assigned to teach reading and writing course is expected to teach reading and writing skills, social studies, science, and literature and the arts. To complete either of the GED lessons, 90 intensive hours are required.

Statement of the Problem

About 800 to 1,200 adult students enroll in the GED program at CCP each semester. Despite large enrollment, only a few candidates complete their study without interruption. Most of them leave the program during the first 3 weeks of the semester, mostly without notifying the classroom teachers or college officials. For example, from a classroom of about 25 students, only 4 to 7 students complete their study without interruption each semester (ABE Report, 1994/95). Interestingly, some of the dropouts register the following semester, only to start and then quit again. More than half of the GED students at CCP are believed to be veterans of a 'show up and leave' cycle. Quigley (1997) reported that in most traditional Adult Basic Education (ABE), GED, and basic literacy programs, most of the students who fail to complete the program drop out during the first 2 to 3 weeks of the course. The same source said

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18% drop out before the completion of the first 12 hours of instruction.

Although the three barriers in Cross' model are considered a good representation of the issues that stop students from completing their educational careers, there have been few studies that empirically investigated the relative strength of the three barriers. Therefore, the major purpose of the present study is to ascertain which of the three types of barriers represent the major problem for GED students at CCP.

Research Question

The question that the study attempted to answer was: Which of the three types of educational barriers proposed by Cross (1992) represent the major problem preventing adult students from completing their GED studies at CCP?

The three types of educational barriers are institutional, situational, and dispositional or psychological. The institutional barriers include time allocated to complete the study, strict attendance policy, poor teaching methodology, teacher's repeated absence or arriving late to class, poor teacher-student relationship, lack of a tutor, lack of courses that attract GED students, tuition, book prices, and so forth (Cross, 1992).

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The situational barriers involve financial problems, lack of time to study, lack of transportation, lack of child care, drug and alcohol abuse, pregnancy, illness, peer pressure, lack of family encouragement, spousal abuse or instability at home, job-related problems, death in the family, and so forth (Cross, 1992).

The dispositional barriers include personal values, attitudes, beliefs, or perceptions toward schooling or education (Cross, 1992).

Definition of Terms

Adult. For this study, an individual who is 16 years of age or above will be considered an adult.

Barriers. Barriers are elements or obstacles causing adult learners to drop out of educational institutions and programs, including the GED program.

Dropout. A student who was enrolled in any GED or adult education programs at CCP sometime during the previous semesters or years but quit the study without notifying the teacher or school official, or student who was enrolled in any private or public school system at one point but for some reason left the school without completing his or her study.

GED. The General Educational Development program is designed to prepare non-traditional adult students for the

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GED test that qualifies them for a high school equivalency diploma.

Race. People of different ethnic groups participated in this study, including Native Americans, blacks or African Americans, Latinos or Hispanic, whites or Caucasians, and Orientals or people of Asian origin.

Study Courses. Study courses are subjects offered at CCP to prepare adult learners for the GED tests. They are writing or reading skills, social studies, science, literature and the arts, and mathematics.

Delimitation

This study was delimited to adult learners who were enrolled at CCP's GED program in fall 1998, spring 1999, or summer 1999. GED students who enrolled in the program at CCP either before fall 1998 or after summer 1999, academic sessions were excluded from this study. Further, this study focuses only on information relevant to factors preventing GED students from completing their study at CCP.

This study was also delimited by the time-line (December 15, 1999 to January 29, 2000) assigned by the researcher to complete the data gathering. Responses returned after the due date were excluded from the final report.

Limitations

There are four limitations to this study:

1. Because of respondents' change of address without further notice, the researcher lost potential sources of information. Many survey forms were returned to the researcher because respondents had moved.

2. This study was limited by the willingness of the participants. Some potential respondents were either reluctant or careless and did not complete the whole survey form as requested.

3. It was beyond the researcher's control to know whether the actual subjects completed the questionnaires, or whether the provided information was true.

4. There were no data that show the demographic and socioeconomic status of former GED students, number of times they signed up for the GED classes, and information on whether they completed the sessions they were enrolled in without interruption.

Significance of the Study

In the past, much of the research on dropouts had been done on either institutions of higher education or traditional schools, namely, elementary and secondary schools. Very few studies have been done on barriers

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believed to have caused learners to quit the GED, Pre-GED, or ABE studies. Thus, this study sought to identify the major barriers preventing adult students from completing their GED study at CCP. The Adult education division in the department of Community Service at CCP is eagerly waiting for the outcome of this study to use it as a tool to combat the ongoing dropout crisis facing its GED program.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education and the state legislature may use the results of this research to support legislation pertaining to the governance and decision-making process for programs and services affecting adult learners. This study could also be beneficial to local adult learning centers and program administrators in determining alternative ways to deal with absenteeism and dropout problems at their respective education sites.

The following chapter addresses a review of the literature. This includes an overview, the history and requirements to participate in the GED program, information on the demographic and socioeconomic conditions of the GED participants, and discussion of dropout problems and research findings.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Overview

Several issues are discussed through the review of the literature in this chapter. Among them, background (the history of the General Educational Development (GED) program in the United States and admission requirements), the socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of the GED participants, and dropout problems are presented. Analyses of potential barriers that prevent the GED candidates from completing their studies without interruption were also examined from findings of previous research works.

The literature review informs a researcher as to the degree to which his or her topic is a currently live issue and helps him or her avoid proposing a study that has already been done (Slavin, 1984).

It is important to note that most of the existing research works on dropouts are on high schools. There are some on adult education programs from other regions but there are none on Philadelphia County. Therefore, the literature reviewed for this study are both published and unpublished materials, which include books, publications, journals, and dissertations.

This chapter will address the following topical headings: history of the GED and participation requirements, the socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of the GED participants, dropout problems, and the barriers of education and research findings.

History of the GED and Participation Requirements

The General Educational Development (GED) testing program was founded in 1942 by the Army, in cooperation with the American Council on Education (ACE), to help reintegrate military personnel into civilian life. The aim was to help returning veterans of World War II obtain a high school equivalency diploma and pursue a college education. The first GED classes were organized at military bases on the border between the states of Illinois and Indiana to prepare the candidates for the tests (Houle, 1996).

Access to the GED was restricted to military persons before the 1960s. The Adult Education Act of 1965 made Federal funds available for Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs, which included the GED program. Two years later, in 1967, admission to GED studies became open to all citizens (Cameron & Heckman, 1993).

Today, there are over 3000 GED training centers across the United States. Candidates are not required to attend the GED classes to take the tests. The Office of Educational Research and Improvement in the U.S. Department of Education stressed that a person is required to be at least 16 years old to take the GED tests or preparatory classes. The GED Testing Service and its Commission on Educational Credit and Credentials (CECC) set the minimum passing standards. Besides, each state can also set its passing conditions above the minimum requirement set by the CECC, which is a cumulative average of 45 points (U.S. Department of Education's Briefing, October 1998).

In the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, GED candidates are expected to score a total of at least 225 or more, which works out to an average score of 45 or more in each of the 5 tests. A candidate who scores less than 40 in any of the five tests is required to retake the test in that particular subject. A candidate who fails to score the required point average in the first test may apply for another test following a waiting period of 90 days (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 1998).

The Digest of Education Statistics (1996) reported that of the 14,903,000 GED test takers between 1974 and 1996 nationwide, 8,955,000 (60%) passed. Data from the American

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Council on Education (1998) show that more than 800,000 people take the GED tests every year at 3,200 test centers across the nation, and 500,000 pass. The Office of Educational Research and Improvement in the U.S. Department of Education (1998) reported that the GED represents 16% of all diplomas issued for secondary school graduates in the United States.

In Pennsylvania, 27,494 students took the GED tests in 1998. Of these, 19,658 passed. This includes those who took the Spanish version (n = 705) and the French version (n = 20). The average age of the GED test takers was 25.6 and on average, they had completed the 9.9 grade level (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 1999).

In response to the criticisms of the practice of giving the equivalency diploma to people with reading levels as low as the 9th grade level, the ACE raised the standards in 1982 and added a written essay to the tests in 1988 (American Council on Education, 1989). Again, in 1997, another change was introduced to the GED tests and is due to be implemented before the end of 2000. The new change promotes less dependency on multiple choice questions and allows the use of a calculator on most of the math section (U.S. Department of Education, 1998).

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Socioeconomic and Demographic Characteristics of the GED Participants

Studies show that GED participants vary in terms of age, race, marital status, and economic status. In 1980, a nationwide study was conducted on 13,000 randomly selected GED students to investigate the race, age, and education background of typical GED participants. The study found whites with 79% majority, followed by blacks (18%). The remaining 3% were from other ethnic groups. More than half of the participants were 21 years old or younger. The mean age was 25.2. In addition, 88% of the participants had completed grade 9 or above (Malizio & Whitley, 1981).

The Adult Education Program Annual Report (1990) on enrollment rate of adult learners in adult education programs (including GED) revealed that adults aged 25 through 34 constituted 33% of participants, 35 through 44 constituted 21%, 45 through 54 constituted 15%, 55 though 64 constituted 5%, and those over 65 constituted 2%. It is interesting to note from the report that as the age of the individuals increased, the interest they had for education decreased.

A large majority of GED participants are believed to be school dropouts. Fine (1991) noted that 38% of students who

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dropped out of high school nationwide returned for a high school diploma or GED equivalency certificate within two years of when they would have graduated. It is also noticed that among urban area dropouts, 25% of females and 43% of males returned to either traditional schools or joined GED programs and received a diploma within two years (Murnane et al., 1995). Atanda (1995) reported that 48% of the participants in one GED program in the city of New York admitted that they had been in similar programs in the past.

Many Studies correlate a family socioeconomic status with a student's likelihood of dropping out. According to them, children from less-well-off families have both fewer educational advantages and fewer role models and are responding to lower educational and occupational aspirations on the part of their parents (Tanner et al., 1995; Wagenaar, 1987). Hargis (1990) also reported that a child whose parents have at least a high school diploma has a lower likelihood of dropping out than a child whose parents did not complete high school.

Roderick (1993) noted that the students who are most likely to drop out of high school are those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, those doing poorly in school, those working an excessive number of hours while attending

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school, those who are less interested in education, and those with single parents.

Studies have also found GED programs as a retreat ground for those affected by the welfare reform law of 1996. Strawn (1998) reported that the welfare reform in 1996 drove many adults and young people into GED studies. Many saw it as a means of survival as well as an access to better job opportunities. The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) requires, among other things, that welfare recipients who had not completed high school participate in educational activities directed toward attaining a high school diploma or GED certificate.

Dropout Problems

Darkenwald (1981) defined dropouts as persons in adult education programs or other learning activities who stop taking part before achieving their original objectives. The U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO)(1986) reported that 14% of students who were sophomores in high school in 1980 dropped out before their expected graduation date. The same study estimated that up to 25% of all students entering ninth-grade in American schools never graduate. Weis, Farrar, and Petrie (1989) also predicted that about 25% of

American fifth-grade students will drop out without receiving a high school diploma. Kronick and Hardis (1990) reported that in 1985, 4.3 million young Americans between the age of 16 and 24, or 13% of that age group, dropped out of school. The GAO (1992) predicted that 25% of American students who enrolled in either private or public schools in 1993 would not graduate. Atanda (1994) estimated the number of Americans without a high school diploma to over 47 million. Quigley (1997) reported that one in three adult learners in America, including those in GED programs, drop out during the first 3 weeks after the beginning of the semester. The same study indicated that the early dropout rate is much higher among people with a low-literacy background than among those with better education levels. In a related study, Development Associates (1993) reported that 18% of adult learners leave the traditional ABE, GED, or basic literacy programs within the first 12 hours of instruction.

Grossnickle (1986) noticed a steady decline in school dropout rate over the years. In 1900, there was a 90% dropout rate from high schools in the United States. In the 1930s the rate dropped to about 66%, to 41% in 1950, and to about 28% in 1985. Farmer and Payne (1992) also noted that

among 17 year olds in 1920, 16.8% graduated from high school. The rate rose to 50.8% in 1940, and 76.5% in 1970.

On the other hand, the Digest of Education Statistics (1996) reported that the percentage of high school dropouts among persons 16 to 24 years old grew from 11.5% in 1994 to 12.0% in 1995. When computed by race in both years, the persons of Hispanic origin ranked the highest in dropping out of school, followed by blacks, and then whites. The dropout rate has dropped among blacks from 12.6% in 1994 to 12.1% in 1995. However, the dropout rate among white students increased from 7.7% in 1994 to 8.6% in 1995. As far as Latinos are concerned, the dropout rate stayed at about 13.0% in both years.

Darkenwald (1981) believed that dropping out of adult programs frequently occurs because a majority of participants perceive adult education as a secondary duty. According to the report, many adult learners consider participation in adult programs to be like a voluntary activity that takes place during free time. For them, attendance is a lower priority than other activities and responsibilities.

Educational Barriers and the Research Findings

Many research reports agree that some of the reasons why people drop out are known. Many dropouts blame more than

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one reason for quitting school. In a study that involved interviews of 342 high school dropouts in Alberta, Canada, 157 dropouts identified at least one reason, 117 gave a second answer, and 68 gave a third answer (Tanner et al., 1995).

The National Center for Education Statistics (1983) conducted a study involving 2,000 school dropouts to investigate the reasons behind their dropping out. Of those 2,000, 33% said they did not like school; another 33% reported poor grades; 19% got a job; 18% got married; 15% could not get along with teachers; 11% had to support family, 11% got pregnant; and 10% were expelled or suspended.

A Pennsylvania-based organization called Tri-County Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC), located in Harrisburg, in its 1992 study titled Project Re-Entry, discussed a series of barriers that are believed to have caused adult learners to quit their GED study. In addition to traditional barriers, which include transportation problems, lack of babysitter or child care, and conflicting work and family schedules, there is also an indication that some dropouts worried that people looked down on them because they believed they were not as smart as others. In

addition, some students blame their age, while others claimed they fear failing the test (OIC, 1992).

Darkenwald and Merriam (1982) classified the barriers that cause many adult learners to drop out of educational programs into four categories. The four categories are situational, institutional, informational, and psychological. Situational barriers are financial problems, shortages of time, lack of transportation, childcare problems, and geographical isolation. Institutional barriers include institutional policies and practices that cause confusion, inconvenience, or frustration for adult learners. Other institutional barriers are inconvenient schedules, inaccessible location, and irrelevant courses. An informational barrier is an institutional failure to provide adult learners with the necessary information about the program before they enroll or while they are still in school. It also includes the learner's failure to seek out any information needed for their continuation in the program or institution. Finally, psychological barriers include personal values, attitudes, beliefs, or perceptions that hinder learners from reaching their respective goals. Psychological barriers affect learners who feel they don't have interest in certain subjects, who claim they are tired

of school or are too old to go to school, who lack confidence in their abilities, and the like.

Cross (1992) reduced the four groups of educational barriers mentioned earlier (situational, institutional, informational, and psychological) to three. They are situational, institutional (informational), and dispositional (psychological). The three groups are represented by the same factors or causes described in Darkenwald and Merriam (1982). The differences are that the factors in institutional and informational come under institutional barriers. The same is true for dispositional and psychological barriers, which were merged and formed dispositional barriers.

Farmer and Payne (1992) divided factors associated with dropping out into two: traditional and non-traditional. Traditional reasons involve low test scores, students trouble with the law, prior school record, prior psychiatric consultation, classroom behaviors, juvenile justice system and mental health counseling. The non-traditional factors include students' dislike of school, desires to find a job, drug problems, weak family-school relations, pregnancy, personality and adjustment problems, family problems (which include broken homes and lack of parental involvement),

pressure from peers, financial difficulties, and incarceration.

Malizio and Whitley (1981) reported that 41% of GED dropouts claimed personal reasons such as pregnancy, illness, lack of child care, financial difficulties, transportation problems, drug or alcohol abuse, instability in the family, and so forth. The same study noted that 20% of the participants stated they left school because of job responsibilities, while 13% said they were demoralized by an unsatisfactory or poor academic report they had received from their respective schools.

Fine (1991) found pregnancy, parenting, and marriage or family formations as major causes for young females to drop out. The same study reported that 40% of pregnant teens leave school without a diploma.

Aston and Upchurch (1994) conducted a study to investigate whether family formation (getting married or rearing children) interfered with women's completion of high school. A sample of 3,055 white and African American women born after World War II, who were also school dropouts, were included in the study. The findings showed that 61% of white and 48% of black participants either did not ever form a family or did not do so until at least two years had passed after leaving school. It has also been noticed that early

family formation has not prohibited females from earning a GED equivalency diploma.

Darkenwald (1981) found a strong correlation between dropout and race. He concluded that low-income blacks were slightly more likely to dropout from adult study programs than students of other races. Gender and job status had no impact on dropping out of adult education programs. However, he also cited age and education attainment as strong indicators of dropping out. He stated that younger and less educated adult learners have a higher risk of dropping out.

Other studies (on secondary schools) found a strong correlation between high school dropout rates and students' race. Weis, Farrar, and Petrie (1989) noted that black males have the highest dropout rate nationally, while white females have the lowest. In urban areas, however, things look slightly different. For example, the dropout rate of both white males and females in urban areas was almost identical (15.7% and 15.3%, respectively). However, the dropout rate for urban black males was somewhat higher than urban black females (24.4% and 16.6%, respectively). Unlike black or white students, the dropout rate among urban Latino females was somewhat higher than urban Latino males (26.2% and 20.2%, respectively).

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Kenna (1994), in a study conducted in Navajo County, Arizona, found that most adults perceived that factors related to situational barriers inhibited them from obtaining their high school or equivalency diplomas. The 115 adults involved in this study were a fraction of the estimated 16,000 adults in Navajo County who had no high school diploma. Female learners perceived lack of time to study as a major barrier that hindered them from receiving a diploma. Household responsibilities and childcare problems consumed most of the time of female learners. Some GED instructors and program leaders were also blamed for being naive or unfamiliar with problems facing adult learners. There was no strong indication in the report to show either gender, race, job, or age as major factors for students' dropping out of the GED program.

In summary, in the preceding chapter, an effort has been made to present a true picture of the GED program and its operation in general. The examination of the literature focused on the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the GED participants. The finding of major studies on circumstances surrounding dropout problems in both traditional schools and adult education programs were also presented.

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The following chapters will address the research design and methodology used to collect and analyze the data for this study, the findings of the study, and a summary of the findings along with a conclusion and recommendation for future research.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The following section describes the methodology that was used to gather data from GED students who were enrolled in the GED program in either fall 1998, spring 1999, or summer 1999 at CCP. The focus of the study was to ascertain the degree to which the three major educational barriers have affected the students' pursuit of their GED study at CCP.

This chapter contains the following subheadings: (a) research design, (b) procedure, (c) description of the research setting, (d) sample, (e) sampling method, (f) instrumentation and data collection, (g) data treatment, and (h) data analysis.

Research Design

This study used a non-experimental design. A quantitative descriptive study was employed to review selected educational barriers and identify, analyze and compare their components. Descriptive research deals with events or phenomena in applied areas such as education, administration, and counseling. This approach provided the researcher with an avenue to describe and analyze factors influencing the successful completion of the GED program at

CCP. A Likert-type survey questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data to ascertain factors preventing adult students from completing their GED study at CCP.

Procedure

The following procedures were used to evaluate the validity and reliability of the instrument: (a) a draft copy of the questionnaire was given to 3 experts in the field of education to evaluate the content validity of the instrument; (b) a pilot survey was conducted on 20 randomly selected GED students in fall 1998, to determine whether the instrument was well suited to generate unbiased data; (c) a test-retest technique was employed to ensure the consistency and reliability of the instrument.

The research instrument was sent to 400 randomly selected prospective participants drawn from 1200 former GED students at CCP who had been in the program at one point either in fall 1998, spring 1999, summer I 1999, or summer II 1999.

A list of former students was obtained from the college's record office through the office of Adult and Continuing Education Division at CCP. Approximately two weeks after the first survey form was mailed, a reminder letter was sent to prompt those who had not returned the

forms. Data used for this were those received within the given time framework set by the researcher, which was December 15, 1999 through January 29, 2000 . The Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) was used to analyze the data.

Description of the Research Setting

Community College of Philadelphia (CCP) is an open-admission, associate degree-granting institution, founded in 1964. Besides the main campus, located at 1700 Spring Garden Street, Philadelphia, the college also has three major regional centers and more than 30 neighborhood sites. CCP serves over 40,000 students every year, which is the largest of all community colleges in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (CCP Catalogue, 1999-2000). The General Educational Development (GED) is one of several non-credit programs offered at CCP. Each semester, about 800 to 1200 adult learners sign up for the GED classes.

Sample

To determine factors preventing the successful completion of GED study at CCP, it was important to obtain a sample of former GED students at the college who had been

enrolled in the program during either fall 1998, spring 1999, or summer 1999. It should be noticed that these students might or might not have been in the GED program at CCP at the time of this study. One hundred sixty eight of the 400 potential candidates returned the survey forms within a given time framework (December 15, 1999 - January 29, 2000). Of these, 124 forms were chosen for completeness and usability. Therefore, data for this study were collected from 124 respondents.

Sampling Method

A systematic sampling approach was used to collect data in this study. In this systematic sampling, the researcher numbered each element in the sampling frame. Then, every nth element (where n is a number) in the total list was selected for inclusion in the sample (McMillan & Schumacher, 1989). A sampling interval was used as a standard distance between each element chosen for the sample. To compute the sampling interval the total number in the target population was divided by the number of the sample (Babbie, 1990).

For this study, the target population of about 1,200 former GED students was divided by 400 (the desired sample) to obtain the sample interval of three. After selecting the

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first person, every fourth person was selected for inclusion in the sample.

A list of former GED students was used as a sampling frame for this study. The sampling frame is the source that includes the eligible people or group (Czaja & Blair, 1996). Thus, the Office of Student's Record and Admission at CCP was asked for a list of former GED students for possible inclusion in this study. The list contained only names and addresses of the participants.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

A survey instrument was used to collect data for this study. A survey is an important tool of data collection in descriptive research in which the investigator selects a sample of respondents and administers a questionnaire or conducts interviews to collect information on variables of interest (McMillan & Schumacher, 1989). The mail survey was utilized to collect data for this study.

A two-part survey questionnaire was employed to collect data for this study (Appendix A). The first part of the instrument was designed to obtain general information about the sample. It consisted of two sections (A and B) with eleven items. Section A sought information about the participant's age, gender, race, and marital and

socioeconomic status. Section B sought to obtain data about participant's academic background. The second part of the survey instrument, which was a core to this study, contained 28 Likert-type scales. This section was designed to collect data about the extent to which the elements of the three major barriers had caused the participant to quit his or her GED study at CCP. Note that participants in this study were advised not to complete the survey form if they never dropped out of the GED program at CCP in fall 1998, spring 1999, or summer 1999. The researcher developed the instrument after consulting with related works (dissertations) of Atanda (1995), Honeycutt (1994), and Kenna (1994).

As stated above, a Likert type scale with a rating scale of one to five was utilized for the responses from Part Two of the research questionnaire. The respondents selected one from among the given alternatives of "Definitely Not True," "Possibly Not True," "Not Sure," "Possibly True," and "Definitely True."

Validity

Whether it is descriptive or experimental, the research is considered valid, credible, and trustworthy to the extent that the rules of validity and reliability are addressed

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when the inquiry is designed, data are collected and analyzed, and the findings are interpreted (McMillan & Schumacher, 1989). To evaluate the content validity of the questionnaire, the researcher used the following procedures:

Three educators from three institutions of higher education (Temple University's College of Education, Cheyney University of Pennsylvania's Graduate School, and CCP's Adult Education program) evaluated a draft of the questionnaire. All three possess years of experience in the field of education and research. Thus, they were provided with a draft copy of the instrument and a brief explanation of the purpose of the study and were asked to respond to the following questions:

1. Are the directions provided to the participants of the study clearly stated? Are there any instructions that need to be modified or totally deleted?

2. Do you think that the data gathered as a result of the items noted in the General Information and Education Background sections of the instrument will be helpful to this study? Should all items be used to collect data in this study? If the answer for the latter is no, which ones need to be deleted or modified?

3. Are the items noted in the instrument accurate representations of possible factors, causing adult students

to drop out of the GED program at CCP? Should some of the items be combined or deleted? Should other items be added?

4. Are there any changes in the presentation style or design of the questionnaire that you would recommend?

The Overall reaction from the three individuals was consistently positive about the validity of the content. There were, however, a few suggestions made to improve the survey. Because of these suggestions, the following changes were made:

1. The language of the directions involving the confidentiality of the identity of the participants in this study was more clearly stated.

2. The language of the questionnaire was made more specific and to the point so that the participants could easily understand and respond to each question without hesitation.

3. The survey questions that required only a "Yes," or "No" response were replaced by questions requiring a responses of "Definitely Not True," "Possibly Not True," "Not Sure," "Possibly True," or "Definitely True."

A pilot survey was administered to 20 randomly selected GED students pursuing their study at CCP's West Philadelphia Regional Center during the fall 1998 semester. A group of 14 women and 6 men took part in this survey. The purpose of

conducting the pilot study was to determine whether respondents could follow the directions, understand and interpret the survey questions exactly the same way, and whether the instrument was well suited to generate unbiased data before utilizing it for final data collection. All 20 participants fully understood the survey forms, although 2 male participants refused to answer questions that asked if they dropped out of the GED program at CCP because of drug or alcohol problems, or incarceration. They claimed that these particular questions were too personal to talk about. Consequently, the researcher dropped the question that asked whether drug or alcohol problems forced participants to quit their GED study. Concerning the other question that asked whether imprisonment caused the candidate to drop out of the GED program, the researcher reconstructed the item using less offensive language. Thus, the statement that reads as "You were put in jail" was replaced with "you were in trouble with the law."

Reliability

To evaluate the reliability of the instrument used in this study, the test-retest technique was employed to ensure that the instrument remained constant in its ability to capture the necessary information. Test-retest reliability

is a measure of scale reliability aimed to measure the correlation between scale scores obtained at one test administration and scores on the same scale taken at a different time. If the correlation is high, the conclusion is warranted that the scale is reliable (Slavin, 1984). Therefore, a draft of the questionnaire was administered twice to 20 GED students at CCP's West Philadelphia Regional Center with a lapse of 2 weeks between the first and second administration. Respondents did not know they would be asked to complete a second identical questionnaire until they received it. The respondents were informed about the nature of the pilot survey and were asked to provide comments about the survey instrument after they had completed it fully. Eighteen (90%) of the 20 participants completed and returned the questionnaires at both testings.

Several analyses were computed to ascertain whether the questionnaire was reliable. First, a chi-square was computed for each of the items in the questionnaire relating the responses at test one and test two. To demonstrate the extent of the reliability, the percentage of the subjects who responded with exactly the same response at both tests was computed. The data are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Percent of Subjects Responding With the Same Response at Both Test Administrations - Scale Reliability.

Item	Participants(n)	Percent(%)	Item	Participants(n)	Percent (%)
1	18/20	90	16	18/20	90
2	19/20	95	17	19/20	95
3	15/20	75	18	18/20	90
4	16/20	80	19	18/20	90
5	16/20	80	20	20/20	100
6	19/20	95	21	17/18	94.4
7	18/20	90	22	16/18	88.9
8	19/20	95	23	16/20	80
9	17/20	85	24	18/20	90
10	19/20	95	25	18/20	90
11	18/20	90	26	19/20	95
12	19/20	95	27	18/20	90
13	18/20	90	28	19/20	95
14	18/20	90	29	18/20	90
15	18/20	90			

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Participants of the pilot survey understood and responded to each item listed in the survey instrument in almost the same way both times. This affirmed the reliability of the instrument used in this study where participants of the pilot survey retained their relative positions concerning each item in the instrument.

In addition, a total score for the three educational barriers was computed at each testing for each subject, and then their scores were correlated. The correlations obtained are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Correlations of the Test Scores for the Three Barriers

Barriers	Correlation Coefficient (r)
Institutional	.80
Situational	.87
Dispositional	.74

Finally, the survey forms were sent to a randomly selected sample of 400 former GED students on December 15, 1999. Included in the survey package were a cover letter that acted as an introductory letter for each respondent,

the survey, and a self-addressed stamped envelope. In the introductory letter issues such as the purpose of the study, the unanimity of the participants, and data reporting were addressed. During the first week of January 2000, letters of reminder along with another copy of the survey form were also sent to those who did not return the first form.

Treatment of the Data

Out of 400 distributed survey forms, 168 were returned for a return rate of 42%. Of these, 124 (31%) were selected for completeness and usability. The remaining 42 were discarded because some essential information such as age, race, or gender of the respondents was missing. The data collected from the survey were analyzed to answer the major research question: Which of the three types of educational barriers - institutional barrier, situational barrier, and dispositional barrier - represents the major problem preventing adult students from successfully completing their GED studies at CCP? The statistical analyses were conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) using the mainframe computer at Temple University. The level of significance was tested at the .05 level.

Data Analysis

Data were obtained from 124 respondents who followed the directions and completed the survey forms accordingly. The following procedures were used to analyze data: First, item-by-item analysis was employed to describe the responses of the subjects for each item in the instrument. The items were ranked according to their mean as a descriptive analysis of how strongly each barrier influenced the subjects' persistence in the GED program at CCP. Second, correlated t-tests were used to compare domain and or factor scores to ascertain which ones most strongly affected persistence of the GED students at CCP. Third, race, age, gender, marital status, and job status were also analyzed to determine whether demographic factors affected the results. Fourth, factor analysis was used to ascertain whether the items that constituted each of the three barriers, namely, institutional, situational, and dispositional actually clustered together.

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CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

This chapter presents the findings of the study. Tables are used to assist in presentation of the data and analyses. Included in this chapter are: (a) Restatement of the Research Question, (b) Demographic Data on the Respondents, (c) Analysis of the Individual Items, (d) Quantitative Findings, (e) Barrier Group Identification, (f) Analysis of Demographic Variables, and (g) Factor Analysis

Restatement of the Research Question

Despite theoretical writing with consensus that the three major categories of educational barriers, namely, institutional, situational, and dispositional, represent the main factors preventing adult learners from completing their GED studies, there have been few studies that empirically investigated the relative strength of the three barriers. Therefore, the major purpose of the present study is to ascertain which of the three types of barriers represent the major problem that causes adult learners to drop out of the GED program at CCP.

The question that the study attempted to answer was: "Which of the three types of educational barriers, institutional, situational, or dispositional, represents the major problem preventing adult students from completing their GED studies at CCP without interruption?"

Demographic Data on the Respondents

From the survey forms sent out to 400 potential subjects, all in Philadelphia and its vicinity, only 168 were returned for a return rate of 42%. Of these, 124 (73.8%) were selected for completeness and usability. The remaining 44 were discarded because in some cases the respondents were unwilling to identify their race, age, or gender. In other cases, they left all or portion of the items from Part Two of the survey form incomplete. Seventy-four (59.7%), of the respondents were Blacks, 25 (20.2%) Latinos, 23 (18.5%) Caucasians, and 2 (1.6%) Native Americans. No response was received from Native American males or people of Asian origin.

Table 3 contains the race and gender of the participants of this study.

Table 3: Research Subjects by Race and Gender

Race	Gender	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
Native Americans	Male	0	0.0
	Female	2	1.6
Caucasians (Whites)	Male	9	7.2
	Female	14	11.3
Latinos (Hispanics)	Male	7	5.7
	Female	18	14.5
African Americans (Blacks)	Male	18	14.5
	Female	56	45.2
Total		124	100.0

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Table 4: Distribution of Research Subjects by Age and Gender

Age	Gender	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
16-20	Male	9	7.3
	Female	17	13.7
21-25	Male	7	5.7
	Female	17	13.7
26-30	Male	3	2.4
	Female	13	10.5
31-35	Male	2	1.6
	Female	12	9.7
36-40	Male	6	4.8
	Female	10	8.1
41-45	Male	1	0.8
	Female	8	6.5
46-50	Male	4	3.25
	Female	4	3.25
Over 50	Male	3	2.4
	Female	8	6.5
	Total	124	100.0

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Table 5 and 6 show the distribution of subjects' marital and job status during their enrollment in the GED program at CCP.

Table 5: Subjects' Distribution by Marital Status

Value	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
Single and have no children	15	16.1
Single and have children	64	52.4
Married and have no children	1	.8
Married and have children	18	14.5
Divorced (separated) and have no children	2	1.6
Divorced (separated) and have children	13	10.5
Widowed and have no children	2	1.6
Widowed and have children	3	2.4
Total	124	100.0

Therefore, more than half of those who participated in the survey (64 or 52.4%) were single parents when they signed up for the GED classes at CCP between fall 1998 and summer 1999. In addition, a significant number of subjects lived either partially or completely on income from public assistance.

Table 6: Distribution of Subjects by Job Status

Value	Frequency(n)	Percent (%)
No job; received public assistance	46	37.1
No job; received no public assistance	18	14.5
Worked part-time; received no public assistance	16	12.9
Worked part-time; received public assistance	12	9.7
Worked fulltime; received no public assistance	26	21.0
Lived on pension, or social security	6	4.8
Total	124	100.0

As presented in both Table 5 and Table 6, more than half (52.4%) of those who participated in this survey were single parents when they signed up for the GED classes at CCP between fall 1998 and summer 1999. In addition, a significant number of subjects (58 or 46.8%) lived either completely or partially on income from public assistance.

Concerning completion of the GED studies at CCP, of the two Native American females who took part in this study, one enrolled one time and the other enrolled twice. Neither of them completed their studies.

Fifteen of the 23 white respondents (7 males and 8 females) said they enrolled in the GED program one time, seven participants (2 males and 5 females) enrolled twice, and one female respondent enrolled three times. However, 17 of the white respondents (7 males and 10 females) never completed their studies, and six (2 males and 4 females) completed one time.

Thirty-eight of the 74 African American respondents (8 males and 30 females) signed up for GED studies one time, 33 respondents (10 males and 23 females) enrolled twice, and three females enrolled three times. Meanwhile, 59 of the African American respondents (16 males and 43 females) never completed their GED studies, and 15 (2 males and 13 females) completed once.

Eleven of the 25 Latino participants (4 males and 7 females) signed up for the GED studies once, 12 respondents (2 males and 10 females) signed up for the GED studies two times, and 2 (1 male and 1 female) enrolled into the program three times. It is also noted that 21 of the Latino respondents (6 males and 15 females) never completed their

GED studies, 3 respondents (1 male and 2 females) completed once, and 1 female respondent completed twice.

In other words, from fall 1998 through summer 1999, 65 (52.4%) of the respondents were enrolled in the GED program at CCP one time, 53 (42.7%) enrolled twice, and 6 (4.8%) enrolled three times. Of all study participants, 99 (79.8%) never completed their studies, 24 (19.4%) completed one time, and one (0.8%) completed twice.

Respondents' last year of formal school attendance, except the one who went to non-graded home school, ranged from 1932 to 1999. Table 7 shows the highest-grade levels completed by the subjects while in school.

Table 7: Distribution of Subjects by Completed Highest Grade Level

Grade	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
6th	4	3.2
7th	1	0.8
8th	12	9.7
9th	30	24.2
10th	38	30.6
11th	30	24.2
12th	8	6.5
Other (non-grade home schooling)	1	0.8
Total	124	100.0

The data record shows that 35 (28.2%) of the 124 survey participants said they had enrolled in GED programs other that the one at CCP in the past, while the remaining 89 (71.8%) said they had not.

A majority of the respondents, that is, 96 (77.4%), signed up for Reading/Writing/ and Mathematics classes, 24 (19.4%) for only mathematics, and 4 (3.2%) signed up for Reading/ Writing/ class.

Only 9 (7.3%) of the 124 participants completed their GED studies without interruption. They are five Black females, one Caucasian male, two Caucasian females, and one Latino female. Consequently, the statistical computation and data analysis on this portion of the study includes data collected from the remaining 115 respondents only.

Analysis of the Individual Items

As stated earlier, 9 of the 124 respondents completed their GED studies at CCP between fall 1998 and summer 1999 without interruption. They were not required to complete Part Two of the survey instrument. Therefore, the statistical computation and data analysis on this portion of the study include only data collected from the remaining 115 respondents who failed to complete their GED study at CCP at least once either in fall 1998, spring 1999, summer (I) 1999, or summer (II) 1999.

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Data collected from the 28 items listed in Part Two of the survey instrument were utilized to answer the major research question posed by the researcher. It is "Which of the three types of educational barriers - Institutional, Situational, and Dispositional (Psychological), represents the major problem Preventing adult students from completing their GED studies at CCP without interruption?"

As an initial analysis, the responses of the subjects on all 28 of the survey items were analyzed. Subjects were asked if any of the 28 items prevented them from completing their GED studies at CCP. Each question has five options, with 1 being Definitely Not True (DNT), 2 being Possibly Not True (PNT), 3 being Not Sure (NS), 4 being Possibly True (PT), and 5 being Definitely True (DT). Table 8 shows the rank order of the subjects' responses to the 28 survey questions, where the rank ordering was computed in reference to the means of the items.

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Table 8: Rank order of Subjects' Responses by Mean

Q.#	Barrier*	Items	S C A L E S**					Total	Mean
			(1) DNT	(2) PNT	(3) NS	(4) PT	(5) DT		
12	S	You didn't have time to study	44	11	0	19	41	115	3.017
13	S	Responsibilities at home	47	10	1	9	48	115	3.009
14	S	Job responsibilities	60	12	0	8	35	115	2.530
26	I	You didn't know how to study	58	10	2	24	21	115	2.478
16	S	Transportation problem	61	12	1	9	32	115	2.470
15	S	You didn't have a babysitter	67	7	3	5	33	115	2.391
10	I	You didn't understand what was being taught in the class	58	15	2	25	15	115	2.339
8	I	Teacher's repeated absence or late arrival for the class	64	9	3	24	15	115	2.278

* I = Institutional S = Situational D = Dispositional

** (1)DNT = Definitely Not True (2)PNT = Possibly Not True (3)NS = Not Sure
(4)PT = Possibly True (5) DT = Definitely True

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Table 8 (Continued)

Q.#	Barrier*	Items	S C A L E S **					Total	Mean
			(1)DNT	(2)PNT	(3)NS	(4)PT	(5)DT		
11	I	There was no tutor	59	14	9	21	12	115	2.243
3	I	Inconvenient class schedule	65	14	3	17	16	115	2.174
7	I	The teacher didn't have enough knowledge about the subject he was assigned to teach	69	14	4	19	9	115	2.000
24	D	You didn't like to study	74	13	8	16	4	115	1.809
25	D	You've gotten low grade in the past and demoralized	74	18	7	9	7	115	1.757
23	D	You felt that you were too old for school	82	12	3	5	11	115	1.661

* I = Institutional S = Situational D = Dispositional

** (1)DNT = Definitely Not True (2)PNT = Possibly Not True (3)NS = Not Sure
(4)PT = Possibly True (5)DT = Definitely Not True

(Over)

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Table 8 (Continued)

Q.#	Barriers*	Items	S	C	A	L	E	S**	Total	Mean
			(1)DNT		(2)PNT	(3)NS	(4)PT	(5)DT		
17	S	Friends or family members didn't like you going to school	83		18	1	7	8	115	1.617
22	S	Spousal abuse, or instability in the family	86		10	3	5	11	115	1 .652
9	I	You were not allowed to Borrow books from the library	77		19	8	8	3	115	1.617
5	I	Lack of interesting courses	77		22	4	8	4	115	1.609
18	S	Pregnancy	90		10	0	3	12	115	1.583
27	D	You were tired of school	82		20	5	4	4	115	1.504

* I = Institutional S = Situational D = Dispositional

**(1)DNT = Definitely Not True (2)PNT = Possibly Not True (3)NS = Not Sure
(4)PT = Possibly True (5)DT = Definitely True

(Over)

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Table 8 (Continued)

Q. #	Barrier*	Items	S C A L E S** (1)DNT	(2)PNT	(3)NS	(4)PT	(5)DT	Total	Mean
21	S	Trouble with the law	93	10	4	5	3	115	1.391
1	I	Unaffordable tuition and or textbook cost	83	25	3	3	1	115	1.383
19	S	Illness	87	11	0	6	11	115	1.365
4	I	Strict attendance policy	87	20	2	6	0	115	1.365
6	I	Disagreement with the teacher	85	24	3	3	0	115	1.339
28	D	Education has no purpose	91	17	3	2	2	115	1.322
20	S	Death in the family	97	10	2	2	4	115	1.313
2	I	Too many school assignments	85	25	4	1	0	115	1.313

* I = Institutional S = Situational D = Dispositional

** (1)DNT = Definitely Not True (2)PNT = Possibly Not True (3)NS = Not Sure
(4) PT = Possibly True (5)DT = Definitely True

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In reviewing the data in Table 8, several aspects of the results are worth noting:

1. Overall, the means for all items are low, indicating that none of the factors are dominant in causing a person to drop out of the GED program. As can be seen from Table 8, even the highest ranked items have means that are slightly over 3, indicating that the subjects are "Not Sure" about the impact of the item.

2. Five of the top six items are considered part of the Situational Barrier scale.

3. Especially for the highest rated items, the distributions are bimodal. For example, for Items 12, 13, and 14, the highest frequencies are for "Definitely Not True" and "Definitely True." This would seem to indicate that there are sub-populations within the sample that are affected by different factors.

Barrier Group Identification

The 28 questions from Part Two of the instrument were labeled as institutional, situational, or dispositional based on their content or relatedness to the barriers. Therefore, Items 1 through 11 and Item 26 all related to the institutional barrier. All the 11 items in this group reflect provisions of education and leadership. Items 12

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through 22 constitute the situational barrier. Items in this category deal with social, political, and economic aspects of adult learners. The remaining survey questions (23, 24, 25, 27, and 28) were grouped under the dispositional (psychological) barrier. Items in this category had to do with adult learners' feelings about themselves as well as their attitudes toward schooling.

Tables 9, 10, and 11 show lists of items grouped under the three major categories of educational barriers. Subjects were asked if any of the problems listed from 1 to 28 had caused them to drop out of the GED study at CCP during those four academic sessions mentioned above. Means were computed for responses provided by subjects to each item in all three categories.

Table 9: Institutional Barrier

Q. #	Items	Mean
1	Unaffordable tuition and, or textbook costs	1.383
2	Too many school assignments	1.313
3	Inconvenient class schedule	2.174
4	Strict attendance policy	1.365
5	Lack of interesting course	1.609
6	Disagreement with the teacher	1.339
7	The teacher didn't have enough knowledge about the subject he was assigned to teach	2.000
8	Teacher's repeated absence, or late arrival for the class	2.278
9	You were not allowed to borrow books or other reading materials from the library	1.617
10	You didn't understand what was being taught in the class	2.339
11	No tutors for GED students	2.243
26	You didn't know how to study	2.478
	Average Rating Per Item	1.8449

Table 10: Situational Barrier

Q. #	Items	Mean
12	You didn't have time to study	3.017
13	Responsibilities at home	3.009
14	Job responsibilities	2.530
15	You didn't have a reliable baby sitter	2.391
16	Transportation problem	2.470
17	Friends, or family members didn't like your going to school	1.617
18	Pregnancy	1.583
19	Illness	1.635
20	Death in the family	1.313
21	Trouble with the law	1.391
22	Spousal abuse, or instability in the family	1.652
	Average rating per Item	2.0553

Table 11: Dispositional (Psychological) Barrier

Q. #	Items	Mean
23	You felt that you were too old for school	1.661
24	You didn't like to study	1.809
25	You've gotten low grade in the past and felt demoralized	1.757
27	You were tired of school	1.504
28	Education has no purpose	1.322
	Average rating per item	1.6104

Correlated T-tests were also computed to ascertain whether there was any difference among the three types of barriers. The results of the t-tests are presented in Table 12.

Table 12: T-tests for Paired Samples Among the Three Types of Barriers

Barriers	Subjects (n)	Mean	t-Value	2-tail Prob.
Institutional	115	1.8449		
Situational	115	2.0553		
	Mean Difference	-.2104	-3.37	.001
Institutional	115	1.8449		
Dispositional	115	1.6104		
	Mean Difference	.2345	3.50	.001
Situational	115	2.0553		
Dispositional	115	1.6104		
	Mean Difference	.4449	5.70	.000

The t-test results indicated that there were indeed significant differences among the three types of barriers. It is evident from Table 12 that situational barriers received the highest rating from the majority of the survey participants. A majority of the participants believed that problems associated with situational barriers were the primary factors that contributed to their dropping out of the GED program at CCP. Institutional barriers were cited as the major factor for the next largest group of participants. The smallest number of participants cited dispositional barriers.

Therefore, it is evident that a majority of the respondents perceived factors related to the situational barriers as major reasons for dropping out, while dispositional factors were least often the problem.

Analysis of Demographic Variables

Data analyses were also conducted to determine whether demographic factors affected the results of the study. Consequently, t-tests or one-way ANOVA's were computed for the sample participants by their gender, race, age, and year of education.

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Gender

Table 13 reports the t-tests for independent samples by gender. To simplify the presentation of the results for the demographic variables, only significant results are presented.

Table 13: Gender-based Item-by-Item T-tests

Q. #	Gender	Frequency (n)	Mean	2-tail prob.
3	Male	34	2.7353	
	Female	81	1.9383	.021
10	Male	34	1.8235	
	Female	81	2.5556	.012
13	Male	34	1.8235	
	Female	81	3.5062	.000
14	Male	34	3.2647	
	Female	81	2.2222	.008
15	Male	34	1.4118	
	Female	81	2.8025	.000
16	Male	34	1.7647	
	Female	81	2.7654	.002
26	Male	34	1.7646	
	Female	81	2.7778	.001

Seven items produced significant results for gender. The results of the analysis show that male subjects had higher means than females on Item 3 (inconvenient schedule) and Item 4 (job responsibilities). Therefore, it is likely that a significant number of working male subjects could not complete their GED studies at CCP because of job related problems.

The data analyses for gender also indicate that female respondents failed to complete their GED studies at CCP because of problems related to either responsibilities at home (Item 13), lack of a babysitter (Item 15), transportation problems (Item 16), or not knowing how to study (Item 26). Therefore, it is most likely that gender was a factor in GED students' inability to complete their GED studies at CCP without interruption.

To parallel the analyses for gender, a series of one-way ANOVA's were computed for each of the 28 items to ascertain whether race or ethnicity had an effect on subjects' dropping out from the GED program. None of the analyses were significant at the 0.05 level. Therefore, these analyses indicate that race is not a major factor for subjects' dropping out of the GED program at CCP. The data analyses for race or ethnicity involved only the three ethnic groups significantly represented in this study. They

were blacks, whites, and Latinos. Native Americans were not used in analysis because there were only two in the sample.

Similar analyses were performed separately for both marital and job status on the 28 items to ascertain if either of the two had any significant impact on subjects' dropping from the GED program.

Marital Status

The sample for marital status was divided into four groups:

1. I was single and have no child (n = 15); Group 1
2. I was single and have a child (n = 64); Group 2
3. I was married and have a child (n = 18); Group 3
4. I was divorced, separated, widowed (n = 18); Group 4

One-way ANOVA's were used to ascertain whether differences existed among the barrier groups. Significance was found for eight items. Table 14 presents the results of the ANOVA's for marital status.

Table 14: Significant Effects for Marital Status

Q. #	Item	*G R O U P				F & P	Scheffe Results
		1	2	3	4		
10	You didn't understand what was being taught in the class	1.67	2.41	1.61	3.39	5.49 p=.0015	2∠4, 1∠4
11	No tutors for GED students	1.87	2.08	2.06	3.33	4.21 p=.0073	1∠4, 1∠2
13	Responsibilities at home	1.67	3.55	2.67	2.56	5.47 p=.0015	1∠2, 1∠3
15	You didn't have a reliable baby sitter	1.00	2.98	1.83	2.00	7.16 p=.0002	1∠2, 1∠4
16	Transportation problem	1.53	2.80	1.89	2.67	2.97 p=.0351	1∠2, 3∠2
23	You felt that you were Too old for school	1.07	1.58	1.44	2.67	6.60 p=.0004	1∠4, 1∠2
24	You didn't like to study	2.53	1.83	1.39	1.56	2.73 p=.0472	3∠1, 3∠2
26	You didn't know how to study	1.87	2.36	2.06	3.83	5.74 p=.0011	1∠4, 1∠2

*Group:

1 Single and had no children
2 Single and had children
3 Married and had no children
4 Divorced, separated, or widowed

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The following are the results of the review of the data in Table 14:

1. Three of the top four items are part of the institutional barrier scale. They are Item 26 (did not know how to study), Item 10 (did not understand what was being taught in the class), and Item 11 (no tutors for the GED students).

2. The Scheffe report indicated that subjects from Group 4 (divorced, separated, or widowed) had slightly higher means on Items 10, 11, 23, and 26. Of these, only Item 26 (You did not know how to study) had a mean over 3.5. However, the mean score for Item 26, which is 3.83, would not be high enough to claim that marital status had a significant effect on subjects dropping out of the GED studies.

3. Subjects from Group 2 (single and have children) had relatively higher means than the other groups on Items 13, 15, and 16. However, none of the obtained mean scores are high enough to suggest that a significant number of single mothers left the GED program because of marital status. The highest mean was 3.55 (Item 13).

4. It is interesting to note that subjects from Group 3 (married and had children) had obtained low means in almost all items from Table 14. Therefore, items listed in Table 14

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had no major impact on subjects from Group 3 in their completion of the GED studies.

Job Status

A series of ANOVA's was also used to ascertain whether job status had a major impact on the persistence of the GED students. For this analysis, the sample was divided into five groups. They were: (a) I had no job, received public assistance (Group 1)(n = 45), (b) I had no job; received no public assistance (Group 2)(n = 16), (c) I worked part-time, received no public assistance (Group 3)(n = 14), (d) I worked part-time, received public assistance (Group 4)(n = 12), and (e) I worked full-time, received no public assistance (Group 5)(n = 23).

Make note that subjects who depended on pensions or social security incomes for a living were excluded from the ANOVA's because of their small number. Table 15 shows the analysis for job status involving seven items that were statistically significant.

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Table 15: Significant Effects for Job Status

Q. #	Item	* G	R	O	U	P	F & P	Scheffe Results
		1	2	3	4	5		
13	Responsibilities at home	3.78	1.88	2.36	4.17	2.30	7.00 p=.0000	2∠4, 2∠1
14	Job responsibilities	1.24	1.56	3.79	3.67	4.48	38.24 p=.0000	1∠5 1∠3
15	You didn't have a reliable baby sitter	3.27	1.31	1.79	2.92	1.79	6.28 p=.0001	2∠1, 2∠4
16	Transportation problem	3.20	2.44	1.14	3.42	1.65	7.05 p=.0000	3∠4, 3∠1
18	Pregnancy	2.02	1.19	1.07	1.67	1.35	2.46 p=.0495	3∠1, 2∠1
19	Illness	2.02	1.44	1.14	1.42	1.22	2.56 p=.0431	3∠1, 3∠2
21	Trouble with the law	1.29	2.44	1.21	1.42	1.04	7.007 p=0000	5∠2, 5∠4

*Group: 1 No Job; received Public assistance
2 No job; received no Public assistance
3 Worked Part-time; received no public assistance
4 Worked part-time; received public assistance
5 Worked full-time; received no public assistance

Following is a summary of data analyses from Table 15:

1. The seven items listed in Table 15 were all from the situational barrier category.

2. Job responsibilities (Item 14) had higher means from members of Group 3 (worked part-time, received no public assistance, mean = 3.79) and Group 5 (worked full-time, received no public assistance, mean = 4.48). Most likely many student-workers quit their GED studies at CCP because of job related factors. Therefore, there is a strong indication that job status had a major effect on GED students, especially those who worked full-time while going to school.

Factor Analysis

Since the questionnaire was constructed for the purpose of this research, it was thought necessary to ascertain whether the items in the survey questionnaire that were determined to reflect the three major barriers were actually clustered together. To determine this, a principle component factor analysis followed by a varimax rotation was performed on the 28 items. This produced five factors with eigenvalues greater than one. The results of the rotated matrix are presented in Table 16.

Table 16: Factor Analysis by Mean

Q. #	Barriers*	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5
1	I	.56	-	-	-	-
2	I	.50	-	-	-	-
3	I	-	-	-	-	-
4	I	-	-	-	-	-
5	I	-	-	-	-	-
6	I	.54	-	-	-	-
7	I	-	-	.76	-	-
8	I	-	-	.64	-	-
9	I	.45	-	-	-	-
10	I	.57	-	-	-	-
11	I	.59	-	-	-	-
12	S	-	.51	-	-	-
13	S	-	.76	-	-	-
14	S	-	-	-	-	-
15	S	-	.79	-	-	-
16	S	-	.45	-	-	-
17	S	-	-	-	-	-
18	S	-	.40	-	-	-
19	S	-	-	-	-	-
20	S	-	-	-	-	-
21	S	-	-	-	.51	-
22	S	-	-	-	-	-
23	D	-	-	-	-	.73
24	D	-	-	-	.44	-
25	D	-	-	-	-	.66
26	I	-	-	-	-	-
27	D	-	-	-	.67	-
28	D	-	-	-	.67	-

* I = Institutional S = Situational D = Dispositional

It is evident from Table 16 that the structure of the questionnaire is, to some extent, similar to the predicted structure. Specifically, Factor 1 contains all items that were considered part of the institutional barrier scale. As such, this factor could be "Institutional Barriers." The items that load on Factor 2 are all from the situational barrier scale and could be called "Situational Barriers." Factor 3 contains Item 2 (too many school assignments), Item 7 (the teacher did not have enough knowledge about the subject he or she was assigned to teach), and Item 8 (teacher's repeated absence, or late arrival for class). All items in Group 3 constitute institutional barriers; therefore, these factors could be termed "Teacher Variables."

Factor 4 includes Item 21 (trouble with the law), Item 24 (did not like to study), Item 27 (tired of school), and Item 28 (education has no purpose). Except Item 21, which is situational, the other three items represent dispositional barriers and could be called "Attitudinal Variables."

There are two items in Factor 5. They are Item 23 (you were too old for school) and Item 25 (got low grade in the past and became demoralized), both dispositional barriers. They could be termed "Psychological Variables."

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, a synopsis of the study is presented and the results of the research are reviewed. The second part of this chapter contains the conclusions drawn from the findings of the research. The third part presents the recommendations based upon the findings and conclusions from the study. The final section includes recommendations for further study.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify and determine which one among the three major educational barriers, if any, had caused many adult learners to quit their GED studies at CCP. The three categories of barriers include institutional, situational, and dispositional.

Data were collected from 124 adults who had enrolled in CCP's GED program at one point between fall 1998 and summer 1999. This group represented 31% of 400 randomly selected potential participants who were drawn from a target population of 1200. A quantitative approach was used to collect and analyze data. Twelve questions were concerned with institutional barriers, 11 with situational barriers,

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and 5 with dispositional barriers. Prior to the final data collection, a pilot survey was conducted on 20 randomly selected GED students who were pursuing their studies at CCP's West Philadelphia Regional Center in fall 1998 to evaluate the reliability of the research instrument. The collected data were evaluated for usability before the final analyses.

Conclusions

A review of the research findings indicates the following conclusions based upon data analyses and response to the research question established in Chapter 1 of the study:

1. Most items related to situational barriers had slightly higher means, followed by factors associated with institutional barriers, and then dispositional barriers.

2. The results of data analysis indicate that gender was likely a major factor in subjects' dropping out of the GED program at CCP. This notion agrees with the earlier findings by Kenna (1994), Aston and Upchurch (1994), and Malizio and Whitley (1981) who came to the same conclusion.

3. The results of data analysis show that race or ethnic origin of the subjects was not a factor in students' dropping out of the GED program at CCP. This is contrary to

the findings of Darkenwald (1981), who reported presence of a strong correlation between dropping out and race in that low-income blacks were slightly more likely than other students to dropout from adult education programs. It also contradicts Weis, Farrar, and Petrie (1989), who reported that black males have the highest dropout rate in the nation. White females have the lowest dropout rate.

4. The data analysis report indicates that marital status was not a major factor in preventing GED students from completing their studies at CCP. However, some groups, like divorced, separated, or widowed subjects, obtained slightly higher means in items like "did not understand what was being taught in the class" (Item 10), "no tutor for GED students" (Item 11), "transportation problem" (Item 16), "too old for school" (Item 23), and "did not know how to study" (Item 26). Still, the finding does not strongly suggest that marital status was a major factor in subjects' dropping out of the GED program. No finding from earlier studies disagree with the current finding.

5. The result of ANOVA analysis concerning job status indicates that dropping out was likely high among the GED students who worked either full or part time while going to school. A significant number of subjects from Group 3 (worked part-time; received no public assistance) and

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Group 5 (worked full time; received no public assistance) reported that they quit their GED studies because of a job. The current finding is supported by Malizio and Whitney (1981), who reported that job-related problems were one of the major causes for adults to drop out.

Recommendations

The recommendations suggested by the researcher are all based on the findings of the study. The following recommendations are put forth for adult education administrators, teachers, concerned public officials, and the research community in general.

Recommendations for Adult Education Program Leadership and Concerned Public or Government Branches

1. Many adult learners perceive home responsibilities as obstacles preventing them from completing their GED studies. It is recommended that the CCP, in collaboration with concerned government offices, should try to organize a distance learning program where adult educators could provide GED lessons using television or the Internet.

2. Many adult learners quit the GED studies because the class schedule is in conflict with their work schedule.

Solution to this problem could come from both the government and the employer. It is recommended that employers create an atmosphere where workers can get the necessary education at the work place. It is also recommended that the government compensate employers for their goodwill by giving them a tax break, or by offering them financial support that goes towards education.

3. Lack of reliable childcare is the other major obstacle, especially for female students. Therefore, concerned government or state offices should make a great effort to solve problems associated with childcare.

4. It is recommended that the CCP come up with an alternative approach to help those learners who have problems understanding what is being taught in the classes. The new approaches may involve basic study skills, tutoring, and the like.

5. It is recommended that adult education program leaders organize in-service and staff development workshops for teachers to help them understand the barriers that prevent adult learners from completing their GED studies.

Recommendations for Future Study

In view of the need for continuing research, consideration should be given to the following:

1. Further study that involves both GED students and teachers should be designed to determine whether any differences in the findings would exist. It is recommended that the study be expanded to include factors associated with teaching and learning styles and how these factors effect the completion of the GED program without interruption.

2. The study should be replicated using a different sample of GED students that represents all ethnic groups, including Asian Americans (who are missing from this study), to determine whether differences or similarities in the findings would exist. It is also important to note that this study is the first of its type to be conducted on CCP's GED program. However, the researcher would also like to emphasize that data for this study were collected from a small fraction of students compared to hundreds of candidates who sign up for the GED class each semester. Although this study carries important information, which is very helpful for adult education reform, the researcher still recommends further study that has broad base representation of the GED population.

This study has attempted to increase public understanding of the barriers that inhibit adult learners attempting to complete their GED studies at CCP without

interruption. It is everybody's responsibility to share the burden and help educate the illiterate and the undereducated members of the society. The researcher encourages the Adult Education Program leadership at CCP, the City of Philadelphia, and the Adult Education Program leadership in Harrisburg to follow the suggested recommendations in this study.

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APPENDIX A

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear participant:

You are invited to participate in a study that is designed to investigate barriers preventing adult learners from successfully completing their GED study at CCP. You were selected as a possible participant because you have been enrolled into the GED program at CCP in either fall 1998, spring 1999, or summer 1999. Any report which might be published as a result of this study will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you (the participant). Therefore, please answer the questions and mail in enclosed stamped envelope. Thank you for your cooperation.

PLEASE DO NOT SIGN YOUR NAME ON THIS FORM

Part One: General Information

Section A: Age, Gender, race, marital status, and occupation

1. Your age is between: (check one)
___16 & 20 ___21 & 25 ___ 26 & 30 ___31 & 35 ___36 & 40
___41 & 45 ___46 & 50 ____ Over 50

2. Gender:
Male ____
Female____

3. Race: (check one)

____Native American
____Caucasian (White)
____Oriental (Asian American)
____Latino (Hispanic)
____ Black (African American)
____ Others (Specify)

4. Marital status: (check one)

____ Single & have no child
____ Single & have a child, or children
____ Married & have no child
____ Married & have a child, or children
____ Divorced, or separated & have no child
____ Divorced, or separated & have a child, or children
____ Widowed & have no child
____ Widowed & have a child, or children

5. When you enrolled in GED class at CCP. You: (check one)

____ had no job & received public assistance
____ had no job & received no public assistance
____ were working part-time & received no public assistance
____ were working part-time & received public assistance
____ were working full-time & received no public assistance
____ were living on pension, or social security

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Section B: Education Background

1. The highest grade you completed while you were in school was: (check one)

___ 5th or below ___6th ___7th ____8th ____9th

___10th ____11th ____12th ____Other (specify)

2. You have been out of either elementary school or high school since 19_____

3. Did you participate in any GED program in the past other than the one at CCP? (Check one)

_____Yes

_____No

4. From fall 1998 through summer 1999, how many times or semesters were you enrolled into the GED program at CCP? (Check one)

____one _____two ____three ____ four

5. If you enrolled into the GED program at CCP at least once from fall 1998 through summer 1999, how many times or semesters were you able to complete your study? (Check one)

___none ____one ____two ____three _____four

6. From fall1998 through summer1999, you were enrolled in: (check one)

____ Reading only

____ Mathematics only

____ Both Reading/Writing/ & mathematics

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Part Two

Below are Questions related to Educational Barriers. If you did not drop out of the GED program at CCP during the period of either in fall 1998, spring 1999, or summer 1999, DO NOT answer any of the questions below.

Directions:

Below are factors believed to have caused many adult students to drop out of the GED program. On a scale 1 to 5, with 1 being Definitely Not True and 5 being Definitely True, please rate how much you agree with each of the following statements regarding the reason(s) for your dropping out of the GED program at CCP in either fall 1998, spring 1999, or summer 1999. You may check (X) in the scale of your choice.

Rating Scale:

(1) Definitely Not True (DNT)
(2) Possibly Not True (PNT)
(3) Not Sure (NS)
(4) Possibly True (PT)
(5) Definitely True (DT)

You dropped out of the GED program at CCP because:

	1)Def. Not True (DNT)	2)Poss. Not True (PNT)	3)Not Sure (NS)	4)Poss. True (PT)	5)Def. True (DT)
1. Unaffordable tuition, or textbooks cost					
2. Too many school assignments					
3. Inconvenient class schedule					
4. Strict attendance policies					
5. Lack of interesting courses					
6. Disagreement with the teacher					
7. The teacher didn't have enough knowledge of the subject he or she was assigned to teach					
8. Teacher's repeated absence, or late arrival for the class					
9. You were not allowed to borrow books, or other materials from the library					
10.You didn't understand what was being taught in the class					
11. No tutors for GED students					
12. you didn't have time to study					
13. Home Responsibilities					

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	1)Def. Not True (DNT)	2)Poss. Not True (PNT)	3)Not Sure (NS)	4)Poss. True (PT)	5)Def. True (DT)
14. Job responsibilities					
15. You didn't have a babysitter					
16. Transportation problem					
17. friends, or family members did not like you go to school					
18. Pregnancy					
19. Illness					
20. Death in the family					
21. Trouble with the law					
22. Spousal abuse, or instability in the family					
23. you felt that you were too old for school					
24. You did not like to study					
25. You have got a low grade in the past and became demoralized					
26. You did not know how to study					
27. You were tired of school					
28. You thought education has no purpose					

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE OF A REMINDER LETTER

REMINDER

We have not received your response to a survey research mailed to you a while ago. As you realize, this study is aimed to determine factors preventing GED students from successfully completing their study at Community College of Philadelphia. Therefore, your participation in this study is very important. Assuming that you either misplaced, or did not receive the original survey form, we sent you another copy. Please complete and mail it in the enclosed stamped-envelop as soon as possible. We appreciate your best cooperation.

Sincerely,

Researcher

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

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Sign here, → please

Signature: Admasu E.

Printed Name/Position/Title: Dr. Admasu E. Tucho, Instructor

Organization/Address: 5120 Cedar Ave Philadelphia, PA 19143

Telephone: 215-747-0328

FAX:

E-Mail Address: abditwaaq@msn.com

Date: 5/28/02

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